



26th June 2008

Ms. R. Parry
Ofcom

By email to PSBReview@ofcom.org.uk

Dear Ms. Parry

Ofcom PSB Review – Consultation – TayScreen Response

We note the content of the PSB review and would refer to previous submissions to Ofcom including those by Dundee City Council and our other partner councils in January. The Review cover sheet is also attached as requested at your web page:

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/psb2_1/howtorespond/

Since previous submissions an initiative on digital local TV has been developed by Cllr Fraser Macpherson of Dundee City Council, with the advice and support of the Institute of Local TV (ILT). This has led to the formation of an initial working group consisting of representatives from the production, business, business development and college/university sectors in Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth & Kinross. The working group is developing a strategy for the development of regional TV and broadcast transmission capacity, assessing demand for local services and identifying potential bidders for licences if these are subject to auction.

This is also a key issue for regional communication –

- to get people involved in their communities
- for business development
- to promote and raise awareness of projects (regional, European, international)
- for regional, national and international networking

It remains the position that there is a strong case for Fife and Tayside being involved in the opportunities that local TV could bring. Other areas such as Edinburgh and Glasgow are highly likely to have local TV services. Fife and Tayside can provide evidence both of consumer demand and of the technical and business capacity to support the operation of local TV transmission and content production for broadcast.

Digital local TV presents a new media and communications opportunity with the potential to make a significant impact on regional economic development, political engagement, tourism and cultural awareness and participation. This is not only about screen production and opportunities for people involved in media. More importantly it is about an important communications tool that can be used for the purposes above.

Throughout Europe, the switchover to digital transmission of nationally broadcast TV is freeing up spectrum for other uses ranging from mobile telephony to digital local TV. There are plans to allocate this resource to other users such as local TV channels and mobile telephony. In the UK this spectrum. We are mindful of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education that voted on 2nd June 2008 in favour of proposals calling on the European Union to encourage alternative media in Europe in order to promote pluralism and cultural diversity.

In the context of TV, local does not have to mean limited – either geographically or in terms of content. Local TV also has great potential for networking at regional, national and trans-national levels.

Key Issues

- Transmitter Capacity and Technology and Possible Licence Auction by Ofcom
- Production Capacity, Regional Facilities and Skills
- Competitive Regions
- Possible bidders for licences and finance
- Potential Audience, Evidence of Demand for Service and TV interaction with Broadband
- Strategic and Action Plans

Transmitter Capacity and Possible Licence Auction by Ofcom

Previously Ofcom produced a report stating that only 25 out of over 80 main transmitters in the UK would be enabled and put up for auction. We are most grateful that this has since been revised to make provision for all transmitters in the UK particularly as a number of transmitters were previously included that serve lower populations than the transmitters for Fife and Tayside with a combined population of over 750,000.

Production Capacity, Regional Facilities and Skills

There is a growing production and service capacity in the region (currently over 50 production companies).

Three leading universities (Abertay, Dundee and St. Andrews) and six colleges offer media production courses and, of these, Abertay and Dundee have invested heavily in production and studio facilities with St Andrews focusing on creative and media business. Abertay currently hosts broadcasts for Radio Scotland and both Abertay and Adam Smith have plans to establish TV arms. The colleges have also invested heavily in state-of-the-art facilities. Three of the colleges (Adam Smith, Dundee and Perth) are partners in the Creative Loop. Funded by Skillset, the venture was recently awarded the prestigious Skillset Screen Academy status. Investment in facilities has also been extensively supported by the European Union.

It is noted that a model for college facilities being used for production is the joint venture between the BBC and Birmingham University whereby a media campus has been established.

Competitive Regions

Availability of digital local TV could be a key issue in regions remaining competitive with others in attracting business, industry and population.

Possible bidders for licences and finance

Several companies in Fife and Tayside have indicated that they are interested in bidding for a licence either on a stand alone basis or as part of a consortium.

Advice on possible external and public funding sources is also being sought.

It is fully appreciated that any company planning to bid for the licence would be expected to develop and produce a fully considered and reasoned business case. Content for such business plans is partly reliant on the economic environment to which companies would have to respond including the terms of any licence auction.

As plans and conditions for the auction are being prepared, it is premature to offer any form of outline business plan but a brief SWOT analysis indicates the following factors:

Potential Audience, Evidence of Demand for Service and TV interaction with Broadband

As above, Fife and Tayside have a combined population of over 750,000. It should also be noted that there are potential outlets beyond domestic households including retail, entertainment, leisure and community centres.

We refer to your own survey “Digital Dividend Review” that reported that “local TV on Freeview” was the number one new application demanded by consumers, ahead of both “extra SD channels” and “High Definition on Freeview”.

There are also opportunities to network content nationally and internationally. Scotland has a particular strength in having wide ‘audience’ well beyond the nation’s boundaries; particularly the expatriate community and people who have historic links with the country. It is foreseeable that content of a high standard would attract a strong audience amongst this group and present a ready market for content syndicated for broadcast.

On broadband, significantly more people receive a TV signal than have access to broadband. Given the experience of national TV there is a clear synergy with internet/broadband delivery – the audience ‘push pull’ effect whereby TV and broadband drive audience towards each other. Broadband can be used to enhance the TV offering and maximise community benefits and commercial/merchandising revenues.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information and we should welcome the opportunity to participate further in the consultation process.

Yours sincerely

Julie Craik
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www.tayscreen.com